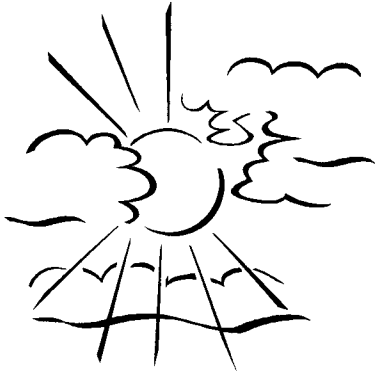


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Articles in Today's Clips

Monday, November 14, 2005

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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No more surprises in Nate case, judge rules

Web-posted Nov 14, 2005

All communication regarding Nathaniel Abraham will be done in open court

By STEPHEN FRYE
Of The Oakland Press

The judge presiding over the case of Nathaniel Abraham, who at age 11 killed a man, has ordered that all communication regarding the case be done in open court or with all parties present.

The order from Oakland County Chief Probate Judge Eugene Arthur Moore came in response to prosecutors being unhappy about not receiving reports of a police investigation into Abraham, who is being held at the W.J. Maxey Boys Training School near Ann Arbor, for supposedly fathering the child of a staff member.

DNA tests showed Abraham was not the father, but it has not been clarified yet on the record whether he engaged in a sexual relationship with a staff member. If he had, the staff member could face charges because it is illegal to have sex with an inmate, even consensual sex.

Abraham, now 19, will be held until he is 21, having been sentenced as a juvenile for his second-degree murder conviction in the 1997 shooting death of Ronnie Green Jr., 19.

Abraham is due before Moore today for a regular review hearing of his treatment.

In his order from Nov. 1, Moore said he was not present at one of the meetings between social workers and lawyers for Abraham. Prosecutors were not at the table, which prompted an angry response from Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcycia.

The judge apologized for prosecutors being left out of another review meeting with his staff, in which they reviewed Abraham's case to "see if anything needed to be done to intensify his treatment and improve the methodology in order to try to increase the chance of success."

Today's hearing is important for Abraham, who has said he wants to spend the last year of his incarceration in a halfway house. His attorneys maintain that Abraham must begin to acclimate himself to society if he is going to succeed once he is free from state custody.

Meanwhile, Moore has previously said that he will not grant that request unless Abraham has completed his educational and rehabilitative program at Maxey. The regular reviews of his progress over the past year have shown that it has been slow, marred by a conflict on sports fields. But there has been success also, with Abraham accepting responsibility for his crime and trying to share his experience with other young people.

Moore said in his court order that his goal is twofold — public safety as well as rehabilitation for Abraham.

"There is no guarantee of success, but if we can rehabilitate while in custody, we have a far greater chance of success upon release," Moore wrote, adding that he has had "concern about whether the training school is doing a good enough job with Nathaniel Abraham."

In 1997, Abraham became the youngest person charged with first-degree murder.

The judge also ordered that psychologist Dr. Jack Haynes meet with Abraham and attorneys on both sides, and then write a recommendation for the court.

Published November 12, 2005

Group mediates disputes for youths Eaton County tries to avoid court for juvenile offenders

By Hugh Leach
Lansing State Journal

CHARLOTTE - A group of Eaton County professionals says there is a better way to deal with problems involving young people.

They have formed Eaton County Balanced and Restorative Justice to encourage dispute resolution in many cases rather than suspension, expulsion or court action.

"With the traditional suspension from school for a dispute between students, there is no contact between the offender and the victim and the anger will still be there," said Julie Klomp, assistant director of the NEC Alternative High School, a joint effort of the Potterville and Waverly school districts.

Advertisement

"By bringing the two together with a mediator, the kids go through a thought process, and often the underlying problem is resolved."

Karen Beauregard, director of the Dispute Resolution Center of Central Michigan, said there are many success stories. The agency is working with the group and training mediators.

The program involves a shift in thinking, said Julie Powers of the Eaton Rapids Public Schools.

"You put the victim, the offender and witnesses together and talk to see how they feel about what happened and what needs to be done to make things right."

The group is trying a two-pronged approach: working with schools to encourage dispute resolution conferences and trying to resolve problems such as minor assaults or property damage that could land a youngster in juvenile court.

At the end of a dispute resolution conference, a contract is drawn up specifying what an offender must do, said Colleen Maylee, a juvenile court probation officer.

That may include repairing or paying for property damage.

One of the problems, however, is getting victims to buy into the idea.

"Some victims say the court needs to punish the offender and wants the court to handle it," said Jay Stark-Dykema, mental health therapist with Community Mental Health Authority.

Eaton County Family Court Judge Michael Skinner, who handles most cases involving juveniles, endorses the group's efforts.

"The goal of the juvenile justice system is to rehabilitate young people," he said.

"Whenever you can bring a victim and a juvenile together, you can aid in not only rehabbing the young person, but also in helping to heal the victim of the offense.

"If you can show through dispute resolution that there are consequences, a kid is unlikely to repeat the mistake."

Contact Hugh Leach at 377-1119 or hleach@lsj.com.

Teen fails to return to local halfway house Friday

An 18-year-old Macomb man serving a sentence at the Parmenter House in Bay City failed to return to the halfway house for young sex-offenders Friday night.

The Times was unable to confirm what type of crime landed Cory Brooks, 18, in the facility at 706 Fifth St. A Parmenter employee contacted police Friday evening to report that Brooks was supposed to report in between 6 and 9 p.m.,

but failed to return from a job.

The employee said Brooks was mad about being denied a weekend pass.

Bay City Police issued a bulletin Friday for officers in the area to be on the lookout for Brooks, a white male who stands 5' 9", weighs 165 pounds and has brown hair and hazel eyes.

An officer said Saturday he was unsure if Brooks had returned to the detention

home operated by the state Department of Human Services, and that there was no warrant for Brooks' arrest.

Parmenter employee Keyon McKinney, who answered the phone at the home, would not say whether Brooks had returned and said a supervisor may be able to provide some information on Monday.

Earlier this month, police arrested two other Detroit-area teens who'd been placed

at the Parmenter House for failing to register as sex offenders. Eric W. Smirnes and Joshua M. Robertson, both 18, both had been convicted as juveniles of first-degree criminal sexual conduct and have since been located.

Smirnes was found staying in an apartment house at 714 S. Madison Ave.; Robinson was in the Oakland County Jail, where he's being held on unrelated charges, Bay City Police said.

Monday, November 14, 2005

Local agenda

Forum offers dose of clarity to Medicare plan changes Session in Redford Twp. is first of three lawmaker is hosting to help seniors with new drug coverage options.

By Darren A. Nichols / The Detroit News

REDFORD TOWNSHIP -- State Sen. Laura Toy, R-Livonia, will host the first of three presentations Tuesday to inform residents about the new Medicare program.

Starting Tuesday, senior citizens can enroll in the Medicare drug plan of their choice. Everyone with Medicare must make a decision about their drug coverage, Toy said. Those who delay beyond May 15 could face higher premiums in subsequent years.

Medicare provides coverage for hospital care and doctor visits to more than 42 million elderly and disabled beneficiaries, but until now the program has not paid for outpatient prescriptions.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for residents to learn more about the new Medicare prescription drug coverage," Toy said.

"I'm glad to make this important information available to my constituents in Garden City, Livonia Redford Township and Westland. I encourage anyone on Medicare to come to help learn which option is right for them."

The first meeting is set for 11:30 a.m. Tuesday at the Redford Township Senior Center, 12121 Hemingway. Other sessions will be at 12:30 p.m. Nov. 21 at the Livonia Senior Center, 15128 Farmington Road, and 3 p.m. that day at the Garden City Maplewood Senior Center, 31735 Maplewood.

Toy has arranged for an expert to visit the centers to discuss the new prescription drug benefit to help people with Medicare make a better decision on the right plan for them.

Although the government has spent more than \$250 million to promote and explain the benefit, only 20 percent of seniors have initially made up their minds to enroll, a survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Harvard School of Public Health found.

An additional 37 percent said they would not sign up, while 43 percent said they had not decided what to do.

Many senior citizens are confused about having to pick among dozens of private prescription plans that will offer the government-subsidized benefit packages.

Marie Zielinski, 77, said she has a number of questions about the program she wants answered. Zielinski said she's hopeful the session will be informative.

"It'll be very helpful," said Zielinski, who has lived in Westland 36 years. "I am very concerned and confused. My friends are confused, too. They bought books and read on it and they still don't understand.

"How are they going to make it clear to people?"

For information, call (517) 373-1707.

You can reach Darren A. Nichols at (734) 462-2190 or dnichols@detnews.com.

Medicare forces seniors to make choice

Sunday, November 13, 2005

By Kathleen Longcore
The Grand Rapids Press

John and Lynn Sicklesteel are checking things off the to-do list before they head south as snowbirds. They will see their doctors, get the motor home ready, forward the mail, stop the newspaper.

And, for the first time, they will enroll in a Medicare prescription plan.

Two years ago, Congress passed the nation's first prescription coverage under Medicare, with dozens of private insurance companies providing the benefits. This year's enrollment period begins Tuesday and runs through May 15.

For the first time, Medicare no longer is automatic -- beneficiaries have choices to make.

The process can be overwhelming. Seniors have received an avalanche of mail touting different plans. Medicare meetings are everywhere -- one local expert has conducted 40, with another 40 scheduled. Getting a grasp on the plans, then deciding the best one, can take hours.

Not only is reality sinking in for seniors, but also for their children, who are increasingly recognizing they must educate themselves to help their parents navigate the maze.

The younger generation's worth also extends to technology. For area seniors who don't have a computer, picking a plan is almost impossible without help, said Virginia Timmer, 77, of Jenison.

The changes are "hard to digest," she said. "I don't even know what kind of questions to ask. And I don't have the Internet."

Senior advocates stress there's enough time to make an educated choice. Still, they worry too many people don't realize they must sign up.

There are 1.5 million Medicare beneficiaries in Michigan sorting through drug plans whose premiums vary from one county to the next. There are also dozens of Medicare Advantage plans -- covering both prescriptions and medical services -- that can replace traditional Medigap coverage.

About 16 percent of the state's Medicare beneficiaries are disabled people under 65 who will be automatically enrolled in a plan.

Retirees who have comparable or so-called "creditable" coverage through their companies or unions need not enroll. They should have received a letter, newsletter or e-mail from their former employers.

The rest of those covered are seniors who have a difficult decision to make. But it's worth the effort, experts say, because seniors with average incomes can cut their drug costs nearly in half.

Jo Murphy, program development coordinator with the Area Agency on Aging of West Michigan, is keenly aware that people are starting to catch on to the deadlines.

"I'm excited because everyone finally wants the information," Murphy said. "But it's a little daunting because everyone wants the information right now."

Her agency has been flooded with calls, she said, and more volunteers are being trained to help. "People need to be patient, and recognize that there are 60,000 people in Kent County trying to do this at the same time."

She tells people if their current prescription help ends Dec. 31, they need to enroll in a drug plan soon. But if there's no urgency, they should gather information now and make a decision after the holidays.

Sicklesteel, 72, is determined to check this job off his list. He and his wife know if they enroll now, they'll start saving on their prescriptions Jan. 1. He has read the government's "Medicare & You" book and has trolled a number of insurance Web sites. But he admits he is confused. "I struggle. But I'm determined, so I won't give up," he said.

Free Press 11/11 Many seniors say they'll skip drug plan

FREE PRESS WASHINGTON STAFF

WASHINGTON — Less than a week before enrollment begins for new Medicare prescription benefits, most seniors don't plan to enroll and many don't understand the rules, according to a study released Thursday.

Starting Tuesday, Medicare eligible seniors and disabled people, including 1.5 million in Michigan, can sign up for a prescription drug plan. But just 20% of the 802 seniors surveyed said they planned to enroll in a prescription plan, according to the Washington D.C.-based Kaiser Family Foundation study.

Despite nationwide efforts to inform Medicare recipients, most still have trouble with the details and many are growing more confused and frustrated.

Sixty-one percent of seniors surveyed said they didn't understand the plan "too well" or "not well at all." Many didn't know they had more than 20 plans to choose from. Others were misinformed about the penalties that could apply.

Still others thought the program was for low-income seniors only.

"A lot of people just didn't think it affected them," said Lisa Trumbell of the Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program.

Questions and answers on Medicare

Part of a continuing Free Press series answering readers' questions and concerns about the new Medicare Prescription Drug program. The Free Press will publish answers to reader questions Mondays through Fridays through Nov. 15, the first day to sign up for the program.

Lorraine Perry, 67, of West Branch is covered under her husband's retiree benefits. She said that if he dies before her, she'll lose her coverage.

QUESTION: Should I pick a plan now?

ANSWER: Your decision whether to choose a plan now should be based upon whether your spouse's retiree prescription coverage is as good as the Medicare prescription drug coverage. His retiree plan administrator should notify him. If the coverage is as

good as Medicare's prescription drug plan then you can keep that coverage until the retiree coverage ends. You would get a special, 63-day enrollment period to select a Medicare Prescription Drug plan without having a penalty. If the retiree coverage is not as good as Medicare's plan, you may want to enroll in a Medicare plan during the initial enrollment or face a penalty and a gap in coverage. But if your retiree insurance covers both health and prescription drug benefits be careful not to drop your retiree coverage.

Most employer-retiree health plans do not allow you to separate benefits and you'll likely lose your health coverage as well.

The answer to today's question comes from experts on the new law at the Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program (MMAP). MMAP volunteer counselors are available at 1-800-803-2174 and can provide information about upcoming events where experts answer questions. To compare plans online, seniors or helpers can go to www.medicare.gov or call 800-633-4227. Submit questions to askaboutmedicare@freepress.com or call 513-222-1824. To see answers to questions already published, go to www.freepress.com/news/health.

- RUBY L. BAILEY

The organization has a statewide toll-free helpline.

"There are so many ins and outs. For the layperson to understand everything that needs to be considered, that's difficult," Trumbell said.

The much-awaited government-sponsored Medicare Prescription Drug Plan online finder is plagued by delays and technical problems.

The site is running now, but its original debut was Oct. 13.

It doesn't matter. Roughly 74% of those questioned had never used the Internet.

Mark Hochhauser, a Minnesota computer consultant with businesses and government agencies, said seniors would have to download two programs to run the Web

site's comparison program.

"A lot of them are not going to figure it out or don't want to try," Hochhauser said.

On Oct. 1 insurers began soliciting Michigan's eligible Medicare recipients. Lorraine Schofield of Westland said she and her husband, Kenneth, have been swamped with solicitations for drug plans.

Schofield, 69, who will have employer-sponsored coverage through December, needs to choose a plan that will best cover the seven prescriptions the couple take.

"It's mind-boggling to us," she said. "I've been on the computer. We're not stupid. It just seems very confusing."

Others said they haven't received any information from

companies offering prescription drug plans.

"I haven't got nothing," said Herman Attie, 69, of Novi. The retired steel worker tried for weeks to choose a plan. "I went on the Internet. All I got was see this, see that. But there was no material."

Attie said he called Medicare's toll-free number. "I talked to somebody and they didn't know and somebody was going to call me back. Nobody called me back."

The survey was done with the Harvard School of Public Health. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points.

Contact RUBY BAILEY at 202-906-8203 or bailey@freepress.com

Health Care Pools

Public school employees need real savings

In a welcome about-face, state Republican leaders have torpedoed their controversial plan to create a mandatory health care insurance pool for public school employees.

Their interest in the issue was proper: Employee health insurance costs the state's school districts about \$2.1 billion. And the costs have been rising so steadily that districts are hard-pressed not to devote large chunks of any new funding to health care.

The problem with the Republicans' proposed solution is that it was really a half-answer, promising savings too minuscule to help districts. Based on an independent study done by the Hay Group of Arlington, Va., it was believed districts could save about \$165 per pupil.

That's clearly money districts could use. But the truth is, much of it would have been eaten by pension and other nonacademic obligations. And the mandatory nature of the plan would have severely dented public school employees' already limited health care choices.

Good of the GOP to finally concede the flaws. Less clear is whether the alternative it is now touting can deliver any greater savings.

The new version still centers on districts pooling to purchase insurance at reduced rates, but doesn't require participation.

Sen. Shirley Johnson, the author of the new Senate Bill 896, insists there is big money to be saved. The new plan should be given the same fair hearing Johnson, R-Troy, gave complaints about the old one.

As hard as unions have been working with school districts to cut costs on their own, there may be value in further collaboration, with the Legislature or with neighboring districts. The Michigan Education Association, which already successfully pools health care for many public school employees and thwarted the last effort, must at least take a hard look at the new proposal.

Health care is such a big burden on public schools, legislative leaders and labor have to work together. If they do, Michigan might just wind up with a bona fide way to put real money back into classrooms.

P.S. THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE has banned the import of Beluga caviar because the sturgeon that produce the delicacy are being overfished to a point of extinction in Russia. You know the old maxim, *caviar empty*.

Free p 11/14

November 13,
2005
THE NATION

States Resurrect Topic of Medical Care

As employer-based coverage shrinks, lawmakers in capitals across the country are trying to address the needs of the uninsured.

By Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar, Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — Healthcare reform may be dead in Washington, but a growing number of states — under both Republicans and Democrats — are taking steps to expand medical insurance coverage.

Faced with a problem they find increasingly hard to ignore, governors and legislators in at least 20 states have reached agreements to expand access to healthcare by squeezing money from existing health programs and taking other politically difficult steps, including some tax increases.

In Illinois, Democratic Gov. Rod Blagojevich is about to sign a bill providing affordable health coverage for uninsured children of working parents.

Massachusetts has taken on a bigger challenge. There, Republican Gov. Mitt Romney and the Democrat-controlled Legislature are negotiating over competing plans to cover all of the state's half-million uninsured residents.

"The fact that nothing is happening in Washington is not deterring states," said Alan R. Weil, executive director of the National Academy for State Health Policy. "The lack of action in Washington is not because of the lack of a problem. It's because of a lack of agreement and, frankly, a lack of consequences for failing to address the issue. At the state level, if you have a Medicaid budget problem or a growing number of uninsured, you have to tackle the issue."

Given the seemingly intractable economics of healthcare, it is not clear whether the states will be able to sustain the efforts they have launched. Controlling costs continues to be difficult. States' revenue can fluctuate. And many are legally barred from running deficits.

But traditional employer-based coverage, the cornerstone of the old system, continues to shrink as the average cost of a family plan approaches \$11,000 a year. And some experts think the modest but growing efforts by states could help jump-start a national debate.

"If any of these states succeeds, it could provide impetus for a national debate in later elections," said Robert Blendon, a public opinion analyst at the Harvard School of Public Health. "If the Iraq war and terrorism were to go away, healthcare issues are going to pop right up because they just bother a lot of the public and voters."

The renewed interest in expanding coverage is unexpected.

Earlier this year, headlines focused on Medicaid cutbacks in Tennessee and Missouri that are expected to leave tens of thousands without coverage. And Florida's experiment with managed care for its poor is being watched warily by liberals.

But a study by the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, released in October, found that 20 states increased access to healthcare in the 12 months that ended in July. In nine states, those expansions reversed previous cuts. For example, Texas rescinded premium increases that had contributed to 149,000 low-income children losing coverage.

By comparison, 14 states took action that limited healthcare access, in most cases by raising premiums for programs covering low-income children.

The Kaiser study found that more states were expanding coverage because budgetary pressures had eased somewhat.

States have not shied from controversial proposals.

Romney of Massachusetts backs a proposal requiring that individuals obtain health insurance, much as they are required to have automobile insurance. Individuals could enroll in an employer or government plan, or purchase a policy. Subsidies would be provided for those with low incomes.

"The fact that a Republican is supporting a mandate is a huge leap," Blendon said. Some conservatives see such an insurance mandate as tantamount to a tax increase, and at the national level President Bush has remained aloof from the idea.

Romney is also at odds with many Democratic lawmakers, who believe employers should be the ones required to provide coverage. The Massachusetts debate may extend into next year, but activists on both sides say chances for a deal appear to be good.

"I think it is likely that we are going to do something here, even though nothing is happening in Washington," said Richard C. Lord, president of Associated Industries of Massachusetts, a business federation trying to stop an employer mandate.

"Most people think something significant is going to happen," agreed John E. McDonough, executive director of Health Care for All, a consumer group.

"Washington needs to wake up and smell the coffee," said McDonough. "Employer-based coverage is melting away like the Arctic ice cap. It is stunning and alarming. The basic underpinnings of the healthcare system are badly eroding."

Published November 14, 2005

Portraits focus on kids who need a home Exhibit's aim is to nudge people toward adopting

By Nicole Geary
Lansing State Journal

Michael and Miquan are 13-year-old twins with opposite interests who cling to the hope of staying together.

Rionne is an 11-year-old football fan who has faced the hope of a new family and had it fall through.

As children in Michigan's foster care system, the chance of finding permanent homes drops with each passing birthday.

Advertisement

But this year, their faces won't go unnoticed.

The first-ever Michigan Heart Gallery is ready to reveal portraits of these boys and at least 50 other waiting children Tuesday.

It will begin in Lansing and move throughout the state with a mission: find families who see the spirit, and the future, beyond the photo.

The concept already has helped hundreds of kids find homes in a half-dozen other states.

"People have said 'I saw this picture, and I knew,'" said Kate Hanley, director of adoption services for the Michigan Department of Human Services. "We really want to educate people about how interesting and loving these children are."

Unlike most kids who spend time in foster care, those featured in the gallery don't have the option of returning to their parents.

They are among about 400 who don't have relatives or foster parents willing to adopt them either.

So they remain state wards, living in institutions or bouncing from one foster home to the next.

Most families want a baby or a toddler, said Kirsta Grapentine, program director for the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange.

Although about half of Michigan's foster kids are 12 or older, only 30 percent of adoptions last year were for kids 10 and up.

The Exchange, a nonprofit agency that recruits adoptive families, is coordinating the Heart Gallery.

The process involved matching volunteer photographers with children and sibling groups.

There are also 14 portraits of families who have successfully adopted children in the past.

"It ended up being a lot more work than we anticipated, but when you see the end result, it's simply amazing," Grapentine said of the portraits. "They will bring you to tears."

Williamston resident Steve Purdy was one of the photographers tapped to capture one child's personality.

He traveled north to Hersey where he spent one summer evening with Roland, 12.

Purdy didn't hear much about the boy's past.

He talked with him about cars and let him shoot some pictures, too.

"He was just real interested in somebody paying attention to him," Purdy said.

"There's a crying need out there for people to take these older kids. There must be a special place in heaven for whoever is willing to do that."

Contact Nicole Geary at 377-1066 or ngeary@lsj.com.

Where to see Michigan Heart Gallery

The Michigan Heart Gallery debuts Tuesday at the Capitol. The exhibit will be at three other Lansing locations before traveling around the state:

Monday, November 14, 2005

Now's the time to reach out to homeless

Shelters need public's support

Sunday began a week of special attention to members of our community who are need. Sunday started a week that asks our compassion and commitment to help make things better.

Homeless Awareness Week is a state and national observance. Advocates of the homeless use it to remind the public there are those who have falling through America's social safety net. Individuals and entire families are without permanent shelter - and that should not be.

This time, local agencies are putting special emphasis on Homeless Awareness Week. The reason is simple: The numbers of homeless here are on the rise.

Safe Horizons, a Port Huron agency that provides temporary shelter for the victims of domestic abuse, also operates two shelters. Agency officials say they are deluged with people in need of shelter.

Although Safe Horizons has used Heritage Hall, an emergency shelter, to handle the overflow in the past, there's no money to open it. Mother Hill's House of Hope, a Port Huron homeless shelter that opened early this year, also faces intense demand. Like Safe Horizons' shelters, Mother Hill's must place potential clients on a waiting list.

This week, advocates of the homeless are visiting various parts of our community to raise the alarm. Soup wagons will be set up at Port Huron, Yale, Algonac, Marine City and Fort Gratiot and Burtchville townships.

In addition, orange ribbons will decorate the main streets of those cities and townships to further underline the need to help the homeless.

The timing is significant. With the Thanksgiving holiday less than two weeks away, the plight of the homeless is especially daunting, and it's likely to become worse.

The winter months normally increase the demand for shelter. With heating costs expected to rise by 50%, the numbers of homeless are likely to grow.

Lack of shelter isn't just a problem for the homeless. It is a challenge to us all.

Please support Homeless Awareness Week. Make a donation to a shelter.

HELP THE HOMELESS TO DONATE

Safe Horizons of Port Huron operates two homeless shelters. Address your contributions to P.O. Box 610968, Port Huron 48061-0968. For more information, call (810) 985-4950.

Mother Hill's House of Hope of Port Huron operates a homeless shelter. Send your contributions to 900 Stone St., Port Huron 48060.

AT A GLANCE TRAVELING SOUP WAGON

Officials with Safe Horizons are inviting members of the community to take part in a soup-and-bread lunch during Homeless Awareness Week. Dates for each community are as follows. For times and locations, call (810) 982-1020.

Today: Port Huron.

Tuesday: Yale.

Wednesday: Algonac.

Thursday: Marine City.

Friday: Fort Gratiot and Burtchville townships.

Originally published November 14, 2005

Bowls of soup battle homelessness

Sunday, November 13, 2005

By Greg Chandler
The Grand Rapids Press

A group of Grand Haven-area Girl Scouts gathered Tuesday at the Ceramic Cafe to decorate bowls for a benefit meal to help the homeless in Ottawa County.

The second annual Soup For All will take place Thursday at two locations -- the Holland Civic Center and St. Patrick's Church in Grand Haven. Today and Monday, area residents can decorate bowls to donate for sale at the meal, with proceeds to go toward the Ottawa Area Housing Coalition's homeless prevention initiatives.

"This is a great opportunity for youth groups, Scout troops, families, company teams and friends to do something fun and helpful for their community," coalition coordinator Andrea Mulder said. The Ceramic Cafe, in Grand Haven, and Paint a Pot, in Holland, are serving as locations for bowl decorations. The cost to decorate bowls ranges from \$10 to \$15, Mulder said.

Organizers have set a goal of raising \$10,000 for this year's Soup For All event.

Last year's inaugural event raised more than \$6,900, which was split between the Community Foundation of the Holland-Zeeland Area and the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation.

The two foundations each have an endowment in which funds are collected to help the homeless, Mulder said.

"The intent is to build up the endowment, where we would be able to have a local source of funding for the homeless," Mulder said.

A "point in time" study conducted this year found 373 people in Ottawa County were homeless, and 205 people were identified as being "precariously housed," meaning they could become homeless within the next 30 days.

The Holland Rescue Mission will provide the soup for the Holland event, while Snug Harbor and Dee-Lite will provide soup in Grand Haven. Panera Bread will provide bread at both locations, Mulder said.

Day in the life of a homeless prevention coordinator

By Mardi Suhs, Cadillac News

November 14, 2005

CADILLAC - After a divorce left Suzanne Gaffney single with a small child, she decided to go back to college to better provide for her family. She considered getting an associates degree in office management. But as she looked through the Baker College catalog, one department jumped out at her - the Human Services program.

"I want to do something that counts," she told herself.

Because leaving her daughter in day care was not what she wanted to do, Gaffney decided the sacrifice must be for a good reason. And even though she knew it might be tough to get a job, her goal was to work in human services.

Now, as the Homeless Prevention Coordinator working with agencies in Wexford and Missaukee counties, Gaffney has a job she feels fortunate to have.

Here she discusses her responsibilities and sheds a light on the homeless situation in our area.

Define for us what your main responsibility is.

I work with people who are homeless or potentially homeless to help them get into permanent, safe and secure housing. This position was created through a grant to provide a coordinator to work with all the agencies and help get people through the system.

I work with shelters, public housing and landlords. If I can't get someone housing, we get short-term help by having them move in with other people, family or friends. We have a lot more people that you can imagine in overcrowded housing situations where there are three and four families living together.

Is there a common factor that homeless people have in common?

There is no one common denominator. Every single case is different. Every family that I work with has their own set of issues and problems.

What do you see as the causes of our local homeless population?

Mental illness plays a factor. Domestic violence plays a factor as well as a lack of education. Low paying jobs, even if people are working full time, are a factor because the lack of affordable housing is huge.

What is the biggest misconception about homeless people?

That people are lazy and don't want to work. If there's a dad working and he gets hurt or has an illness, it takes a long time to get on disability. If they are living pay check to pay check, then they can't pay the rent and face eviction. If there's a divorce and suddenly the mother is single and hasn't been working, what does she do? I see that a lot. The causes for homelessness vary.

What about your daily routine, how does that work?

People come to me in crisis so it's hard to schedule my day. I do go to the OASIS shelter and I work with the New Hope shelter as well. I can get phone calls from FIA. I'm on the go a lot because people don't have the transportation to get to me and I do my best to get to them.

What is the one thing you would like the community to know about homelessness?

It's important that people understand that people, in general, don't choose to be homeless. A lot of times they just need a little bit of help, someone to advocate for them so they can get into an apartment.

What would happen to the people you work with every day if your job wasn't here?

They would be bouncing from agency to agency. They wouldn't be getting case management. The agencies can put band-aids on this huge wound. But I am working to help on a long-term basis. The agencies can't help with life skills training because they don't have time. And that's why this position is so important and why it was created - to fix that wound - to sit down with the clients and go through looking at long-term goals and keeping them in a safe and permanent home.

What is one case you can tell us about?

I think maybe the one that made me feel the best was when I got a call from the Missaukee Council on Aging. They had an elderly lady and there had been a house fire. She lost everything. She had a limited income. They were able to get her into a hotel but couldn't keep her there. By working quickly, using a lot of resources and a lot of agencies working together, I had her in another apartment with furniture, clothing and food in the refrigerator within one week. She was very grateful. It showed how many agencies could pull together and help this person who had lost everything in her life.

Is this work making a difference?

I believe I am making a difference - otherwise I wouldn't get up and come to work every day. There are days and weeks where I want to go home and cry. I'm hearing so much and it's so sad and everyone I'm talking to is in crisis.

But when I finally work with a client and get them or a family into a home, that's what keeps

me coming back. That makes a difference in one family's life or an elderly person's life. A big part of my job is case management, working with them long-term so they don't get back into this living crisis.

Those are the things that keep me coming in and keep me excited.

If people want to help with time or donations, can they call you?

Yes, I would love to have help. We had a huge outpouring during Katrina but that hasn't helped in my job. We have our own homeless issues and people tend to not want to deal with it. They have preconceived ideas about homeless people and the reason for homelessness. I'll take any sort of volunteers and help. I'd love to start a family mentoring program. Call (800) 443-2297.

news@cadillacnews.com | 775-NEWS (6397)

Student has passion to vanquish homelessness

By Cara Solomon
Seattle Times reporter

LAURA MORTON / THE
SEATTLE TIMES
Joseph Seia, a student at
Seattle University, helped
organize the convention on
homelessness and hunger at
the university this weekend.

His father was gone. His siblings were scattered. So Joseph Seia spent his last year of high school sleeping mostly on the sofas of friends.

He went where he felt wanted, living as far away as Olympia. He boarded a bus before dawn those days, arriving at Evergreen High School in White Center before the first bell rang.

"You live in this world where you feel like it's going to end," said Seia, a 21-year-old senior at Seattle University, recalling the times that he was homeless. "There's no future, there's no next month."

Seia, now a theology and public-affairs major at Seattle U., was instrumental in bringing the 18th annual National Student Conference on Hunger and Homelessness to campus this weekend, the first time the event has been held on the West Coast.

Seia was a keynote speaker for the three-day event, which drew about 400 students from more than 90 schools across the country, as far away as New Hampshire and Florida.

The goal was to rally students around stark numbers: The national poverty rate widened this year to include 37 million Americans, according to the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness, which organizes the annual conference. The group is committed to ending hunger and homelessness in the U.S. through education.

Universities compete every year to host the conference, where students learn everything from how to lobby Congress to how to turn activism against poverty into a career.

But Seattle U. stood out, said Jennifer Hecker, organizing director for the campaign.

It was the first higher-education institution to host a tent city for the homeless on its campus, she said.

The tent city became a part of the school's curriculum in February, with professors urging their students to get involved. And when it moved on, Seia and a handful of other students were inspired enough by the experience to apply to the National Student Campaign.

"His passion is very clear," said Hecker, who has worked with Seia for several months. "He's been committed to this his whole life."

The passion is personal for Seia, who lived in poverty in both Seattle and in Samoa. He sees a stark difference between the culture of poverty in both places.

In America, he said, poor people are isolated from the rest of society, shamed and ignored. In Samoa, he said, there is more solidarity.

"Rich, poor — there's such a strong sense of community," he said, "that everyone's dignity is maintained."

Born in California, Seia spent his early childhood living in Samoa, where the adults in the family earned \$30 a week. When Seia was about 12 years old, his father brought the children to America, hoping for a better life.

But it was worse, Seia said. His father, a schoolteacher, did not have the right qualifications to teach in America. He spent the next several years trying to feed his family from the wages of three different jobs.

"It was never enough," Seia said.

They lived in a studio apartment in South Park, five children and their father sleeping on the floor. The visits to the food bank were the most humiliating; they used back alleys to get there, rather than the road. There was the sense somehow that the family had failed.

Seia spent some time in a juvenile detention facility for fighting. Their father later returned to Samoa, taking the youngest children with him. The siblings in Seattle split then.

Moving from home to home he found it hard to concentrate in school, but he listened to words of encouragement from teachers, and finished his senior year.

"It was either that, or give up," he said.

Now Seia is active in campus ministry. One more year and he will move into the community with a college degree.

It is hard to believe sometimes, he said, how lucky his life turned out to be.

Cara Solomon: 206-464-2024 or csolomon@seattletimes.com

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Winter likely to be brutal

Volunteers hope to keep people warm

Friday, November 11, 2005

By Larry O'Connor

loconnor@citpat.com -- 768-4926

With onset of cold weather, faith-based and human service organizers are bracing themselves for an onslaught of people whose heat has been shut off.

Thursday, 30 folks representing several churches and nonprofits huddled in First Presbyterian Church's basement to streamline help.

The average winter gas bill is expected to go up \$40 to \$50 compared to last year, said Dan Bishop, Consumers Energy spokesman.

Disparate efforts to help people in need could further be centralized, which might prompt foundations to donate money, said Ken Toll, United Way of Jackson County executive director.

The utility assistance initiative will meet again Dec. 1.

"This promises to be a pretty tough winter in Jackson and the county," said Toll, whose agency coordinated the gathering. "Allowing people to go cold should not be an option."

Last year alone, Jackson County's 211 referral service received 2,000 requests for utility-bill help.

Those ranks will likely swell, a Consumers Energy spokeswoman said.

"We're going to see a whole new group of people in there because of higher gas prices," said Debbie Harmon, Consumers' manager of low income, senior citizen and special needs assistance programs.

The public utility offers a number of programs, including the state Public Service Commission-mandated Winter Protection Plan for those on low and fixed incomes.

Between November and March, those who qualify can pay 6 percent of their estimated annual bill to prevent shutoff. The remainder is due April 1.

A family-of-two on an income of \$25,660 or less qualifies. The plan is open to seniors 65 and older regardless of income.

Stop-gap measures only push people further into debt, service organizers said.

"The Winter Protection Plan for a number of families gives them false hope," said Ed Banek, Society of St. Vincent de Paul volunteer.

In extreme cases, tips on winterizing windows and doors might also be useless, another volunteer suggested.

"A lot of these places they are living in are places they shouldn't be in," said Ellie White, St. Vincent de Paul volunteer.

"The poor are really, really poor."

Warm the Children kicks off 9th fund drive

All of the money donated is spent on clothing for kids

Sunday, November 13, 2005

BY CATHERINE O'DONNELL
Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

If a child is to learn, say teachers and social workers, he or she needs paper, pencil and books. A child also needs warm, decent clothing - and to know somebody cares about him or her. Warm the Children addresses some of those needs. Run by The Ann Arbor News, Warm the Children begins its ninth annual fund drive today, seeking help in buying winter clothing for needy children.

Each autumn, The News asks teachers and social workers to submit names of kids who need help.

Aided by volunteers, The News then matches families with shoppers, usually members of church groups and service clubs, but also News employees. They meet each family at Meijer stores in Washtenaw and Livingston counties, using News-issued purchase orders to buy \$80 worth of winter clothing for each child.

The News absorbs all administrative costs, so a dollar donated is a dollar for a child's clothing. According to the latest numbers, Washtenaw County has about 3,000 homeless people annually. In 2004, about 440 were children, says Julie Steiner, executive director of Interfaith Hospitality Network, an Ann Arbor group that cares for homeless families at Alpha House, its center on Jackson Road. This week, says Steiner, is Homeless Awareness Week.

Thursday morning, Peggy Galimberti prepared to shop with a Warm the Children family at a Meijer store. "We know children are the fastest growing segment of homelessness," said Galimberti, children's services coordinator at IHN and a social worker for the last 15 years. Alpha House gets good community support, said Galimberti, but it doesn't accept donated clothing, let alone new clothing, because of storage problems.

Sandra Harris, formerly the superintendent of the Lincoln Consolidated Schools and now superintendent of the Oak Park School District, shopped for Warm the Children last year with The Links Inc., a service group of black professional women. This year she's leading the group's participation.

"A lot goes into getting a child prepared to learn," said Harris. "It's more than sitting in a classroom. If a child is hungry or cold or homeless, that's definitely going to impact learning. We have to make sure our children are fed, clothed and sheltered."

Nancy Schleicher, a social worker at Scarlett Middle School in Ann Arbor, sent this note attached to a Warm the Children referral: "As a counselor, I see firsthand how much your program helps our students. Thank for providing such a wonderful service."

Catherine O'Donnell can be reached at codonnell@annarbornews.com or (734) 994-6831.

Bill could put food pantries in peril

Nick Schirripa

The Enquirer

Congress is considering a bill that could financially hurt people who rely on government assistance to put food on their tables. Some Battle Creek residents are worried about a proposed \$844 million cut in food stamp funding. Congress is considering a bill that could financially hurt people who rely on government assistance to put food on their tables. While a congressional vote on a proposed \$844 million cut in food stamp funding was delayed for lack of support last week, some Battle Creek residents are worried about what will happen to them.

More than 9,000 people in Calhoun County receive food stamps to help pay for groceries.

Rachel Reed, 34, of Battle Creek, is a single mother of two. She said she has been in the food stamp program since her divorce four years ago, and she gets about \$134 a month.

Reed said she doesn't receive any child support, and without the food stamps, she has about \$30 a week left in her budget for food.

"It works, because to really be able to afford to feed my family healthy and nutritious foods from like Meijer or Felpausch, I can't afford it," she said. "I think where the cut is going to hurt is when single parents, like me, or the elderly have to choose between buying food or paying for medications."

According to U.S. Department of Agriculture statistics, the Food Stamp Program will provide approximately \$33.1 billion in benefits to 29.1 million people in 2006.

Sherry Conine, 34, of Battle Creek, is a single mother of five children between the ages of 7 months and 14 years.

On top of working, Conine said she will get her college degree in May.

After paying other bills, Conine said she has almost

no money left for food, and the food stamp program gives her \$640 a month to feed her family.

"I'm a part-time nursing student, and the assistance program is helping me get through school," she said.

"Food stamps have made a big difference. My kids can eat more like they should.

To eat healthy is more expensive."

U.S. Rep. Joe Schwarz, R-Battle Creek, said the concern over the food stamp program is understandable, but people may not fully know what is happening in Congress.

"The budget reconciliation process is very arcane, and we haven't had a reconciliation in the House for 10 years because not everyone can agree on things," he said, referring to the legislative package that includes the food stamp funding cut. "There's some real question of whether it will ever come up for a vote because the numbers aren't there to pass it."

Schwarz, a member of the House Agriculture Committee which has control of the food stamp program, said there is much negotiation yet to be done.

"Bottom line, everything is still up in the air," he said.

"The way it looks now and with what happened (Thursday) it's going to be another month until this is

decided, and it could be longer."

According to Bob Randels, executive director of the Food Bank of South Central Michigan, there is never a good time to cut what he calls the already insufficient food stamp program.

"People need to realize the amount of food stamps people are getting right now aren't lasting very long, so they will still have to come to our program," he said.

"We are already seeing double-digit increases showing up on the front lines of pantries and shelters."

The food stamp program is a federal program administered by the state Department of Human Services. According to the state's Web site, Calhoun County had 9,310 food stamp cases in October.

Randels said the Food Bank of South Central Michigan serves about 60,000 people in Barry, Branch, Calhoun, Hillsdale, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Lenawee and St. Joseph counties.

"To take away further enrollment opportunities or the amount of aid available just doesn't make good sense," he said. "To chip away at those meager resources further really isn't fair."

Elaine Hunsicker, executive director of The Haven of Rest Rescue Mission, also

said cuts in the food stamp program could have a considerable impact locally. The Haven provides assistance to the homeless, Hunsicker said, and many of those people are the working poor.

"You have to choose between buying food and paying rent, or the electric bill or heat bill," she said.

"The homeless are not always homeless because they're lazy."

Nick Schirripa covers Calhoun County and Marshall. He can be reached at 966-0692 or nschirrip@battlecr.gannett.com. Read his blog in the News Extras area at battlecreekenquirer.com.

Originally published
November 14, 2005

READER DEBATE

Should Congress cut food stamps, school lunch?

Apparently, the money that is to be cut is the money that has nowhere to go. The feds cannot find enough eligible people to whom they can give the food stamps. They could give the unused money to the people who already qualify for food stamps by increasing the amount they receive.

MARK ROGERS
Fair Haven

Instead of cutting back on providing a bit of food to the needy, why not cut back on the way in which already fat corporations are allowed to feed at the public trough as though it is a 24-hour, all-you-can-eat buffet?

ANNE HAMILTON
Detroit

The food stamp program is another expensive failure of the Great Society. It has been troubled with massive fraud nationally and has been mismanaged at all levels. Cutting is not enough; it should be abandoned immediately.

JOHN CLARK
Sherwood, Mich.

Oh, for heaven's sake, the food stamp program is so under-utilized they have to advertise to get people to apply. Since it's not being used, it should be cut. The line about benefits being cut to 300,000 people and 40,000 children is just another

Cutting food stamps

As part of an effort to cut federal spending by \$50 billion, the House Agriculture Committee has approved \$3.7 billion in cuts that would take food stamps away from an estimated 300,000 people and could cut off school lunches and breakfasts for 40,000 children. Do you support this decision?

YES 66% NO 32%

Cox's bombshell

Did your opinion of Attorney General Mike Cox go up or down after he admitted having an extramarital affair after he said trial lawyer Geoffrey Fieger threatened to expose the indiscretion? (Cox is investigating the legality of Fieger's campaign contributions.)

liberal lie. The unused excess money is just being removed.

JIM KRESS
Northville

Fiscal abuse occurs at the top of the economic ladder, not the bottom.

How anyone can support massive tax cuts to the obscenely wealthy and cuts in social programs is beyond me. Doesn't seem like a "Christian" or "family" value.

MICHAEL HARPER
Berkley

Of course, there is abuse in every program, but cutting the food stamps and especially the school lunch program is criminal.

TRISH GUARINO
Berkley

Not enough. Cut it all. Eliminate all direct federal payments to the lazy, dependent masses. There is nothing in the Constitution to support giveaways. Let churches handle this charity. Those who support Charles Darwin's "survival of the fittest" step up to the plate.

REX PIERSON
Detroit

The mean, cold, selfish disposition of people in America is indeed astonishing to me. With all the wealth of this nation, we will allow citizens to go hungry?

MARLEE BROWN
Farmington Hills

How much longer will this quarter-century shift in resources and wealth from the poor to the very rich go on?

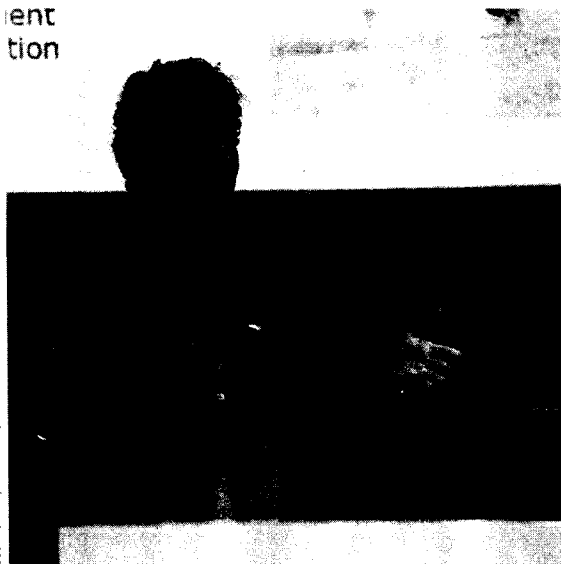
What we need to do, in fact, is reinstate many of the benefits to the struggling lower classes (including those working at less than a living wage) and rescind the "free ride" enjoyed by those who have much more than they need.

J. PAUL EPSTEIN
Ann Arbor

Fauri Memorial Lecture in Child Welfare

Professionals could learn a lot from kids

ent
tion



Michigan Department of Human Services Director Marianne Udow tells an audience at the School of Social Work that child welfare professionals could improve their efforts by listening to the youth they serve.

By Jared Wadley
News Service

Michigan child welfare professionals—despite their diplomas in law, social work or business—don't always know what's best for neglected and abused kids.

In fact, the most powerful but often unheard voices are the youths who don't want to feel disconnected by being removed from the support structure in their homes, said Marianne Udow, director of the Michigan Department of Human Services (MDHS).

Udow delivered the 2005 Fedele F. and Iris M. Fauri Memorial Lecture in Child Welfare Nov. 1 at the School of Social Work. She addressed the current status of child welfare in Michigan, the issues affecting young people and programs designed to

assist children and parents.

"Professionals don't always know more than (youths)," she said. "Too often, we don't listen to them."

Udow said 2 percent of Michigan's children—about 47,000 (19,000 in foster care, 28,000 in the judicial system)—are in the child welfare system.

"That is simply too many," said Udow, who has a master's degree in health services administration from the School of Public Health. "The system doesn't do a good job of protecting and nurturing our children."

Udow said children ages 5 and younger face a critical time for development, and any abuse during that time can affect them throughout life.

While all children in the welfare system can benefit from state-funded programs

to help them and their families, more efforts should be invested in young children, she said.

One example of an intervention that is helping is the Nurse Home Visitation Program, in which nurses visit first-time mothers under age 19 for two years to offer tips on health, parenting and self-improvement. This investment between the nurses and mothers could reduce abuse or neglect of the child, Udow said.

"The system doesn't do a good job of protecting and nurturing our children."—Michigan Dept. of Human Services Director Marianne Udow

"We don't have to solve every problem, but invest in models that work," she said.

MDHS directs the operations of public assistance and service programs through a network of local offices. MDHS programs include temporary cash assistance, food assistance, child care, child support enforcement, medical assistance, adoption and foster care services, domestic violence services, juvenile justice services, and adult and children's protective services.

The Fauri Lecture is presented annually in recognition of the former U-M vice president for state relations and dean of social work and his wife. Much of the current social welfare legislation at both the state and federal levels is the product of his efforts, first as director of the Michigan Department of Social Services, and then through his years in Washington, D.C., where he held numerous leadership positions.

Proposed regents' bylaw change

Editor's note: The Office of the Vice President and Secretary of the University is seeking feedback on the following proposed changes to Regents' Bylaw Sec. 11.59, the Advisory Board on Intercollegiate Athletics: Organization. Underlined sections are additions; sections with strikethroughs are deletions. Comments should be submitted by Nov. 18 to public.comments@umich.edu.

Sec. 11.59. The Advisory Board on Intercollegiate Athletics: Organization

Members of the Advisory Board will be appointed on or before the first of July each year. The officers of the Advisory Board will be a chair, a secretary, and such other officers and committees as will be authorized or chosen by the board. The director of athletics will be chair, *ex officio*, without vote. The chair

will act as presiding officer at board meetings and will act as the board's general executive officer.

There will be a Committee on Academic Performance consisting of the faculty members of the board; and, in addition, a representative of the registrar of the University. The committee will report to and advise the provost and executive vice president for academic affairs and, subject to the final authority of the provost, will have authority to examine and appraise the academic performance of ~~all candidates~~ for intercollegiate athletic teams ~~athletes~~, to determine their eligibility for competition in intercollegiate athletics, and to take any other action regarding such candidates as may seem necessary or appropriate in under the circumstances.

Do You Have Psoriasis?

The University of Michigan Department of Dermatology is currently offering a research study for psoriasis.

Office visits and study agent are provided free of charge to eligible participants. If you are 18 years of age or older, you may be eligible.

**For more information, please call:
(734) 764 - DERM**



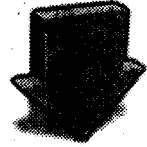
University of Michigan
Medical Center

IRB MED #: 2005-0046

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Looming loss for blind, disabled

If you haven't heard of NEWSLINE, chances are you're not blind or handicapped. The audio newspaper service is free to Michigan residents who are visually impaired or disabled.



Unfortunately, the National Federation of the Blind's NEWSLINE will vanish in Michigan on Nov. 30 if funding isn't found.

Private donations have funded NEWSLINE, which costs about \$40,000 a year to operate in Michigan. Those charitable sources have gone dry.

Using a touch-tone phone, qualified state residents can hear the news read from more than 200 publications, including the Detroit Free Press, the Detroit News and the Lansing State Journal.

What a shame if this valuable program disappears.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 11, 2005

Granholt Urges Legislature to Pass Bipartisan Jobs Package

Governor Continues to Work to Create Jobs in Michigan

LANSING – In her weekly radio address, Governor Jennifer M. Granholt today called on Legislative leaders to pass the bipartisan jobs package they recently announced with the Governor, but have since walked away from.

“The longer it takes to pass this critical legislation, the longer Michigan has to wait for new jobs,” Granholt said. “That’s why I fully expect the Legislature to come back to the table and put a jobs package on my desk that is true to the agreement we reached only a few days ago.”

Granholt called the jobs package a huge victory for Michigan’s citizens, workers, and businesses. The package would diversify the economy, create thousands of jobs of the future, and make sure our children would be able to find good-paying jobs in Michigan.

Businesses would also gain from the plan’s tax cuts and critical relief to manufacturers, like Delphi. It would fight outsourcing and instead “insource” new jobs, new industries, new businesses, and a whole new era of growth for Michigan’s economy.

Even as the Speaker of the House and the Senate Majority Leader back away from their agreement, the Governor continues her work to create jobs in Michigan.

Economic development efforts this year have convinced 31 companies to choose Michigan over more than a dozen other states, creating and retaining 50,000 jobs and leading to almost \$2 billion being invested in Michigan’s economy. In addition, MI Opportunity Partnership has placed 13,000 unemployed workers in good-paying jobs since May and more than 160 public investment projects have been initiated this year, creating more than 3,000 jobs, through the Jobs Today Initiative.

“With the cooperation of the Legislature, the jobs package will be another step, a great bipartisan step, in continuing our work to grow Michigan’s economy,” Granholt said.

The Governor’s weekly radio address is released each Friday at 10:00 a.m. and may be heard on broadcast stations across that state through an affiliation with the Michigan Association of Broadcasters. The address will also be available on the Governor’s Website on Mondays as a podcast for general distribution to personal MP3 players and home computers.

Citizens recruit business leaders to take on poverty

By Seattle Times staff

Organizations working to fight global poverty abound.

But few — if any — have recruited the nation's foremost business leaders to take the problem on, contends a group of prominent local citizens who are doing just that.

The Initiative for Global Development was founded in 2003 by leaders including Daniel Evans, a former U.S. senator and governor; William Gates Sr., co-chairman of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; and Bill Clapp, chairman of Global Partnerships, a Seattle-based nonprofit organization working to alleviate global poverty through on-the-ground projects. The initiative is considered the advocacy arm of Global Partnerships.

Its goal is to recruit business leaders in Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and other cities across the country to urge national officials to make alleviating global poverty a high priority.

Worldwide, some 1.2 billion people are living in extreme poverty, meaning they survive on less than \$1 a day, according to the initiative.

"There are a lot of people who urge the end of poverty," Evans acknowledges. But "the one place that hasn't been heard from is the business and professional" sector.

Today, group leaders are going to Washington, D.C., to meet with officials to enlist their support. And on Feb. 6-7, the group will hold its first national summit there, chaired by former Secretaries of State Colin Powell and Madeleine Albright.

Group members will decide what specific actions to take in the next year, beyond its four guiding principles to invest in people (through education, health care and economic opportunities); invest in the stability and infrastructure of countries; help make the global market work more equitably; and support private-sector practices that benefit the poor.

The initiative began shortly after Sept. 11, 2001.

People in the United States had felt secure because oceans separated the country from intense conflicts abroad, Evans said. But "in one sudden act of terrorism we were suddenly part of the very real world of conflict and potentially open to attack in a way that none of us had anticipated."

But what America's role in the world should be was the question that Evans mulled over during a breakfast with Clapp. They gathered a group of local business and professional leaders, including eventual co-founders Gates, William Ruckelshaus, a former head of the Environmental Protection Agency who now lives in Medina, and former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff John Shalikashvili, who lives in Steilacoom, Pierce County.

Over the next year, members attended briefings by international experts, coming to see that "global poverty was the single most important thing the U.S. could focus on in this new economy" — at the root of so many other issues, Evans said.

For instance, he said, U.S. businesses cannot expand trade if other nations are too poor to sell or buy goods from the U.S. And "nothing breeds terrorism faster than absolute, unrelenting poverty where you cannot see a way out."

The group acknowledges that its goals and methods — at least for now — may seem vague. But "it's practical in this country to generate a constituency for an idea, a goal, and to fill in the mechanics as you go," Gates said.

The group is focusing its membership on business leaders because theirs is a fresh voice that could have great influence with elected officials, said Jennifer Potter, managing director of the initiative.

Potter believes that over the next several years, as more people talk about poverty issues, companies that don't help with the problem — or make it worse — will find it more difficult to do business.

"I liken it to the environmental issue, where about 20 years ago, it wasn't necessarily politically correct to be concerned about those issues or accepted that those issues needed to be listened to," she said.

They are encouraged by efforts such as the Bush administration's Millennium Challenge Account, which imposes greater accountability on foreign aid, making sure selected projects can succeed and that countries receiving aid are committed to fighting corruption.

"Our organization is to urge on others," Evans said. "The football players are out on the field. We're the cheerleaders. But if we make enough noise, cheer loudly enough and consistently enough, it will urge on the people making those decisions."

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November 14, 2005

The Grand Rapids Press

Letters

Needs at home

When we saw the destruction the hurricanes caused throughout the Gulf Coast, we immediately wanted to take action to the storm's victims. Many of us have responded with checks, material goods and even volunteer time.

However, we cannot ignore the needs that are constant in our community. Even though the struggle of a single parent going through a divorce isn't as riveting as scenes of the unfathomable hurricane destruction, or the plight of a homeless family here in Ottawa County is invisible when compared to the numbers of homeless families on the Gulf Coast, the fact is, the challenges of local people in need of help are just as real as those hurting from the hurricanes.

As the weather changes and the temperatures drop, United Way-funded programs will be facing increased demands for their services, due to the increases in cost of living expenses and high gas prices. United Way-funded programs that provide utility assistance are already seeing a spike in the number of residents requesting assistance to pay their bills.

Across the nation charitable organizations are feeling "donor fatigue." People may be stretched to the limit with the amount of charitable giving that has occurred in the last few months. But, we must remember that without the help of committed citizens, organizations like United Way and other well-deserving health and human service agencies cannot help our neighbors in need. We must be prepared to address the needs of the future.

DON AUCH/2005 Campaign Chair
Greater Ottawa County United Way
Holland

Salvation Army needs volunteer bell-ringers

Monday, November 14, 2005

cricks@kalamazogazette.com 388-8557

A familiar sound of the season will be heard starting Friday when volunteer bell-ringers for the Salvation Army in Kalamazoo kick off the organization's annual Red Kettle fund-raiser. The Red Kettle drive will start with a ceremony at noon at National City Bank on the Kalamazoo Mall.

It will continue at more than 40 bell-ringing sites in Kalamazoo, Portage, Oshtemo Township, Plainwell and Otsego until Dec. 24, said Major Steven Koehler, commanding officer of the Salvation Army.

"We have great cooperation (from area businesses) for the bell-ringing season," Koehler said. The Red Kettle drive raises about one third of the Salvation Army's \$1 million budget. Last year, \$350,000 was collected during the fund-raiser.

Funds are used to pay for holiday food baskets, holiday gifts for children and utility help for needy families throughout the year. The Red Kettle drive also helps the Salvation Army pay for clothing for area residents, a food pantry program and tutoring for youths.

As in past years, the Salvation Army needs volunteers to ring bells at area businesses.

"We are asking for a couple of hours of a person's time to help us out," Koehler said. "It's a great experience that will help out those in need."

For more information, call the Salvation Army at 344-6119.